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HOMOPHOBIA: A TENTATIVE PERSONALITY PROFILE

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Summary.—The study of homosexuals only is insufficient to understanding homosexual problems. Research was conducted to investigate individuals whose negative attitude toward homosexuals may contribute to the problem. A tentative profile suggests these individuals may be status conscious, authoritarian and sexually rigid. Other aspects of their personalities are discussed and subsequent research is outlined.

The contribution of societal attitudes to the problem of homosexuality has been amply considered. Among others, Churchill (1967), Cory (1951), Hoffman (1968), Hooker (1965), and Szasz (1965) have noted some of the ways in which negative, repressive, or fearful responding generates many difficulties for homosexuals. In spite of this, most empirical research about homosexuality has been limited to studying the homosexual and has not focused on those members of society whose attitude and behavior are contributing variables. This amounts to what R. L. Williams (1971) refers to as "victim analysis." Speaking in another context (testing of black subjects), Williams states that victim analysis is not sufficient for effective change; "the system that produced the damage must be closely examined and modified." This is applicable to the situation of homosexuals as well. The current study was designed to approach an aspect of the milieu or "system" rather than the victim. It was an attempt to gather some information about the individual who is particularly negative or fearful regarding homosexuality.

METHOD

A 24-item questionnaire was devised. Nine of the items comprise the Homophobia or *H*-scale (see Appendix), the intention of which is to measure negative or fearful responding to homosexuality. The remaining 15 items were created to sample opinions and attitudes on varied issues. Additional information requested included age range, sex, academic major, and religious affiliation. Names were not required.

The questionnaire was distributed by instructors to 130 students in psychology classes at State University College at Fredonia. The students were asked to complete the questionnaire at home (to mitigate observer influence) and return it at the next class meeting. Nothing was said about the nature or intent of the study.

Each of the 93 questionnaires returned (77%) was scored for Homophobia (maximum of 9; minimum of 0). The 21 highest and 21 lowest scores were designated the Homophobic Group (H Group) and Non-homophobic Group

(Non-H Group) respectively. For each of the remaining 15 items, tests of significance were performed comparing male and female homophobic and non-homophobics.

RESULTS

Since no significant differences were found, scores for men and women were combined for each group, and chi squares were performed between groups for each item. The same tests were performed for differences in age, college major, and religious affiliation. All comparisons incorporated Yates' correction. The .05 level of significance was chosen.

Homophobics said "yes" significantly more often than Non-homophobics to the following statements:

1. 'My country, right or wrong' is a very admirable attitude. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 2$, $f_H = 10$; No: $f_{NH} = 19$, $f_H = 11$; $\chi^2 = 5.71$)
2. It is only natural to find the thought of mental illness disturbing. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 10$, $f_H = 17$; No: $f_{NH} = 11$, $f_H = 4$; $\chi^2 = 5.92$)
10. Sexual fidelity is vital to a love relationship. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 7$, $f_H = 18$; No: $f_{NH} = 13$, $f_H = 3$; $\chi^2 = 9.04$)
24. Although I don't always like to admit it, I would like friends to see me with a big house and a fine car after I graduate. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 5$, $f_H = 15$; No: $f_{NH} = 16$, $f_H = 6$; $\chi^2 = 7.73$)

Homophobics said "no" significantly more often to the following statements:

5. There is nothing wrong with a man being passive when he feels like it. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 15$; No: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 6$; $\chi^2 = 4.86$)
13. A belief in God is not important to the maintenance of morality. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 17$, $f_H = 8$; No: $f_{NH} = 3$, $f_H = 13$; $\chi^2 = 7.60$)
15. The income and professional level of a job are not so important to me as being happy with the work I do. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 15$; No: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 6$; $\chi^2 = 4.86$)

No group differences appeared on the following statements:

7. Blacks are asking for too much too soon. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 5$, $f_H = 8$; No: $f_{NH} = 16$, $f_H = 13$; $\chi^2 = .44$)
9. A man who is extremely interested in the arts is somewhat effeminate. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 2$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 19$; $\chi^2 = .52$)
12. I think there should be strong censorship to protect the public from pornography.¹ (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 5$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 16$; $\chi^2 = 3.63$)
16. When a man weeps, or otherwise shows deep emotion, it is a sign of weakness. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 1$, $f_H = 0$; No: $f_{NH} = 20$, $f_H = 21$; $\chi^2 = 0.00$)
18. The United States should end military involvement in Viet Nam immediately.¹ (Yes: $f_{NH} = 20$, $f_H = 15$; No: $f_{NH} = 1$, $f_H = 6$; $\chi^2 = 2.74$)
20. A real woman gets her greatest satisfaction in marriage and child rearing. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 3$, $f_H = 8$; No: $f_{NH} = 18$, $f_H = 12$; $\chi^2 = 2.26$)

¹In subsequent studies these items or related matter should not be neglected, since they failed to meet significance by a cell frequency of one.

21. I would rather lead an adventurous life than a secure one. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 13$, $f_H = 9$; No: $f_{NH} = 7$, $f_H = 12$; $\chi^2 = 1.22$)
25. Pleasure in itself is a worthy motive. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 19$, $f_H = 17$; No: $f_{NH} = 2$, $f_H = 4$; $\chi^2 = .19$)

No significant differences in age range (modal range for both groups = 19 to 20 yr.) or religious affiliation (no affiliation: $f_H = 3$, $f_{NH} = 9$) were found. Comparison of groups by major showed significantly more nursing students ($f_H = 8$, $f_{NH} = 0$) in the homophobic group.

Great caution is required in drawing conclusions about the homophobic personality from this limited sample and selection of items. The research is not definitive but exploratory and heuristic. Obviously, broader social sampling and more items in each area are required. The results suggest probable areas of significance for further research. These areas are reflected in the following working profile of the homophobic personality:

It appears that the homophobic individual is status conscious (Items 15 and 24), authoritarian (Items 1 and 13), and sexually rigid (Items 5 and 10). He does not seem to be rigid about appropriate non-sexual behavior for men and women (Items 9, 16, and 20). He probably does not see homosexuals as a minority group, *per se*, since he is accepting of rights for blacks but not homosexuals (Item 7). Instead, he may view homosexuals as sick, in which case his anxiety about mental illness (Item 2) may be projected onto the homosexual. His attitudes toward security and the pleasure motive appear comparable to those of non-homophobics. His stance on pacifism (Item 18) and censorship (Item 12) and his religious affiliation require additional study. He may be attracted to the nursing profession.

Subsequent research is planned for the refinement and validation of the homophobic scale, for more complete exploration of attitudes and opinions which appear important discriminators, and for sampling on broader socio-economic and age bases.

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APPENDIX

HOMOPHOBIA SCALE

3. Homosexuals should be locked up to protect society. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 5$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 16$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
4. It would be upsetting for me to find out I was alone with a homosexual. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 18$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 3$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
6. Homosexuals should be allowed to hold government positions. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 7$; No: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 14$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
8. I would not want to be a member of an organization which had any homosexuals in its membership. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 10$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 11$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
14. I find the thought of homosexual acts disgusting. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 20$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 1$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
17. If laws against homosexuality were eliminated, the proportion of homosexuals in the population would probably remain about the same. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 16$; No: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 5$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
19. A homosexual could be a good president of the United States. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 2$; No: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 19$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
22. I would be afraid for a child of mine to have a teacher who was a homosexual. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 19$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 2$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>
23. If a homosexual sat next to me on a bus I would get nervous. (Yes: $f_{NH} = 0$, $f_H = 14$; No: $f_{NH} = 21$, $f_H = 7$)	<i>yes</i>	<i>no</i>

Note.—Items are numbered as they appeared on the questionnaire, i.e., randomly interspersed among the other items. Italicized answers provide the key. Ss marked \times by yes or no.

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